
THE ATHENÆUM.

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*Neque cuiquam tam statim clarum ingenium est, ut possit emergere; nisi illi materia, occasio,
fautor etiam, commendatorque contingat.* PLIN. EPIST.

THE VAGRANT.

No. III.

*Ne forte pudori,
Sit tibi Musæ lyræ solers, et cantor Apollo.*

HOR.

APOLLO sings—the MUSES tune the lyre;
Then blush not for an art which they inspire.

FRANCIS.

IN the early stages of society, when the ideas of men were few and imperfect, it was necessary to give them some method by which they might easily remember the small number of thoughts which they possessed, and at the same time be enabled to increase them. For this purpose the Deities sent down a person whom they called POETRY, whose business it should be to adorn and beautify Truth in such a manner as to render her interesting and valuable. He was the offspring of Apollo, whose particular business it was to add pleasure to instruction. MUSIC was the sister of POETRY, and although the former was a little the

eldest, they both began their career together, for the purposes of softening the rude manners which then existed, of reducing knowledge to the lowest capacities, and of making it so enchanting as to be universally esteemed and sought. The appearance of POETRY was highly favourable to his mission; his countenance was fair and pleasing—he was clothed with much grace, in the most delicate robes, and, in order to make himself more generally inviting, it was thought by some he was rather finical;—however, he approached to the extremity of neatness, and prepossessed all the females in his favour. He was joyfully welcomed wherever he appeared, and was received by all as the person who was to complete their happiness. Sought by those of all conditions from the most humble to the most wealthy, he had the well wishes even of the ignorant and thoughtless. He was intimate with few, but accessible to all; and although he was admired in proportion as he was

known, even those who had seen him but once were not sparing of their praises.

The external appearance of MUSIC was not less pleasing than that of POETRY. She excelled him in sweetness of voice, but POETRY was superior in powers of language. They beheld each other with pure affection, and acted with perfect union in all their labours. When POETRY was unable to execute his purposes, he called in the aid of MUSIC, who cheerfully gave the assistance in her power, and when a darling object entered the mind of MUSIC, POETRY never refused to accompany and assist her.

Thus accomplished, admired and disposed, it is easy to imagine that their influence was by no means small upon the minds of men. Indeed, they were so successful by their magical powers, that they not only made singular impressions upon the intelligent and rational; even the beasts of the forests, as we are told, seemed to forget that they were wild, and inanimate Nature was inspired with uncommon motion and joy. But more wonderful effects than these were said, but probably in the ardour of feeling, to be wrought by these CELESTIALS. The Deities themselves, from whom they derived their power, were overcome, and the punishments which they had decreed were either diminished in degree or limited in duration. They stopped the wheel of Ixion, whose motion was decreed to be eternal; and gave the victim a respite from his torments; the stone of Sisyphus ceased to move for a time, and Tantalus in his extacy forgot his thirst.

These things, however, took place before they had become familiar—the power of novelty soon ceased to

operate—they were sensibly regarded with more and more indifference, and not only were men less affected with beholding them, but even they themselves became less ambitious of appearing worthy of their origin. As they were viewed by others with little esteem, they gradually regarded each other with coldness and indifference. Thus, although upon extraordinary occasions they produced effects not less wonderful than formerly, yet, by a repetition of their efforts, they were careless, and began to sink down to a level with common mortals. But their influence was not yet by any means destroyed—the fire burnt slow, but constant, and imperceptibly softened the passionate, melted the obdurate, and gladdened the desponding.

Another reason why POETRY and MUSIC had less ambition than before, was, that their art had been learnt by almost every person of their acquaintance, and they found that, although it depended in some measure on natural endowments, it might be greatly improved by art and cultivation. In this manner their dignity was diminished, and with it their pride of appearing superior to others.

The period had now arrived when POETRY and MUSIC were used as a kind of *philosopher's stone*, which turned every thing into gold. Both sexes were employed in effecting changes upon one another, and the objects around them—but POETRY, as may well be supposed, adhered to his sex, while MUSIC joined herself to the fair.

LOVE, in those days, was the chief business of the inhabitants, and it was not a little indebted to these CELESTIALS. Every rejected swain would attempt to soothe his mistress by the measures of POETRY, and

every lass tried to gain the affections
of the swains by the melody of her
MUSIC.

*Dic mœtos Lyde quibus obstinatus
Applicat aures.*

HOR.

O! thou inspire the melting strain,
To charm my Lyde's obstinate disdain.

FRANCIS.

When the hearts of both were ob-
durate, as was sometimes the case,
POETRY would unite with MUSIC,
and produce, together, those effects,
which from them separately, it was
vain to expect. Hence proceeded
those love ditties and epithalamiums,
which have been in vogue ever since,
and hence likewise those serenades
and midnight warblings which are
yet used to aid the lover in his pur-
pose.

POETRY and MUSIC entered like-
wise into many amusements and du-
ties. By them was the praise of the
Creator made more solemn and in-
teresting; by them was the hero led
into the field to fight the battles of
his country; and the dance owes all
its pleasure to the powers of MUSIC.
Their influence is felt from the inno-
cent party to the bacchanalian revel.

But happy would it be if they had
stopped even here. Soon after this
POETRY and MUSIC had so far de-
generated as to mingle with the low-
est class, and like every thing which
comes within the region of our at-
mosphere, they became corrupted,
and not only descended to vulgarity,
but sunk into indecency. Immodest
in their appearance and conversation,
and frequently indecent and disgust-
ing in their actions, they were, at
times, totally destitute of any of their
former virtues. Suspicion and Mis-
trust accompanied them, and it was
seldom that they were admitted into
respectable assemblies.

Accessit numerusque modique licentia major.

Then POETRY in looser numbers mov'd,
And MUSIC in licentious tones improv'd.

FRANCIS.

As we have taken notice of the
origin and decay of these once valu-
able beings, it may be expected that
their condition at the present time
should be mentioned. Of the charac-
ter of POETRY, we can only say that,
having gone through many successive
changes, from better to worse, and
from worse to better, he is thought,
at present, to be in a state rather of
degeneracy than improvement; but
as the age seems to be sensible of
the fact, hopes are entertained that
he will, ere long, resume his former
elevated station. Perhaps it may be
said that the voice of MUSIC has not
grown much harsher by long usage,
although her intentions are some-
times reprehensible. May the time,
however, soon come, when both
shall have sufficient resolution to
walk together by the side of Virtue,
and aid the cause of Religion and
Truth.

O.

To the Editors of the Athenæum.

MESSRS. EDITORS,

The first numbers of your valuable
literary publication I have perused
with much pleasure, but not without
an intermixture of pain. The piece
"On Fashion," in the last, has occa-
sioned many remarks, and much so-
licitude from the female part of your
readers. I will only mention the
sentence respecting the established
practice of wearing veils. We are
told the "custom is absurd, unrea-
sonable, and, above all, inexpedient."
We wish to know what is "absurd"
in covering a modest face from the
gaze of impertinent observers? Is
there any thing "unreasonable" in a
desire to blush unseen? And where

is the inexpediency of valuing a beautiful face so little, as to wish it to be concealed? I fear many will think a handsome face is the only recommendation to your favour, unless you insert in your next number something to this purpose—that the ornamenting, and *even veiling* the outside of our heads, is of no consequence, if the inside is sufficiently adorned and unveiled.

Your well-wisher,

A LADY.

CRITICISM.

*Sed recti, finemque, extremumque, esse recuso
EUGE tuum, et BELLE, nam belle hoc excute
tatum.*

PERSIUS.

[IMITATED.]

Of power to praise, thou fool, forbear to boast;
He's the best critic, who can blame the most.

CRITICISM has been defined *the art of finding faults*. This, however, is an incomplete definition. Genuine criticism is the art of discovering faults, which are invisible to all but critical eyes. To be sure, there is a species of criticism which delights in commendation; but to point out beauties is a very dull and superficial employment; it being a fact that most writers take care to render these things sufficiently obvious. But their faults they are more commonly cautious to conceal. These, it is the employment of the sagacious critic, to discover and represent in as bad a light as he can.

Whenever, therefore, you hear a man delighted with the beauties of any literary performance, (especially if it be a modern one,) thrown into rapture by an harmonious period, or a happy thought, without hesitation you may set him down for a very shallow fellow. But if on the contrary, he is very rarely or never pleased—if he can sneer with an in-

discriminating self-complacency upon whatever comes in his way—if he can pronounce the words “stuff,” “trash,” “nonsense,” over productions, which, in your apprehension, are excellent, you must esteem him a very wise man. You may not, perhaps, perceive the justness of his censure; but the only reason is, he has more perspicacity than you.

It must be confessed, to be a genuine critic, is an enviable attainment. I know it is said, that such a character loses much of the pleasure which is found by a less captious reader.—But this assertion is false. The man who can be delighted only by faults, will always receive more pleasure in proportion as he imagines more faults to have been found. A critic, in this respect, is like a jealous husband—never satisfied until the worst is proved.

I confess, I have always been ambitious of possessing this sagacious character; and, until the first numbers of the Athenæum was published, flattered myself that I had attained some considerable eminence in this department of literature. I then found, however, that there were critics, even in Yale-College, almost as sagacious as I. But to put the matter fairly at issue, I beg leave to offer the following critique on Goldsmith's *Country Clergyman*, that readers of the Athenæum may know, if they will not yield me the palm of criticism, yet I can carp and cavil, in some humble degree, as well as they.

The description begins thus:

Near yonder copse, where once the garden smil'd,
And still where many a garden flower grows wild,
There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,
The village preacher's modest mansion rose.

A very extraordinary beginning this for the delineation of a character! The poet is about to give us a

panegyric on the virtues of his country parson, and commences by telling us where his garden was situated. Had he been about to describe the character of the man who supplied the culinary wants of the village, this might have been very well; but what has an old garden, overgrown with brambles and weeds, to do with the character of a preacher?

The two last lines are absolute nonsense. To speak of shrubs disclosing a place is absurd. Shrubs conceal, they never disclose; and how a mansion can be said to rise, is inconceivable—unless it be that the village preacher's house was like a Dutch barn, whose roof hoists up and down, as may suit the convenience of the owner. And yet this wretchedness, among superficial readers, has passed for a specimen of just description. *O seri studiorum!*

A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing rich with forty pounds a year.

The first line here contains a wonderful piece of information, viz. that the village preacher *was a man*. "A man he was," &c. Surely the poet might have thought this superfluous, if he had reflected that the pulpit is not commonly supplied by either women or boys.

The word "passing," in the second line, is ambiguous. It is sometimes used for tolerably, indifferently, as we say, passing well—that is, tolerably well; or it may mean that he passed among his neighbours for a rich man. In the first sense it is not true;—in the second, it conveys no praise.

Remote from town he ran his godly race,
Nor e'er had chang'd, nor wish'd to change his place;
Unskillful he to fawn, or seek for pow'r,
By doctrine fashion'd to the varying hour,

Far other aims his heart had learn'd to prize,
More bent to raise the wretched than to rise.

The first couplet here contains an inconsistency not unlike that which is exhibited in the case of Sancho Panza, who is related to be jogging on behind his master on the ass that had just been stolen; for the race of godliness must differ widely from all other races, if a man can run it without changing his place.

Nor is this the only error of this unfortunate verse. In the second line the poet has confounded the tenses. The ellipsis supplied is, "Nor e'er had chang'd, nor" had "wish'd to change his place." The poet's meaning is—He had not chang'd his place, nor did he wish to change, &c. But he has sacrificed syntax and sense to measure.

The next contains a similar error; the imperfect and the present are coupled. There can be no coincidence between doctrines that are fashioned, and the hour that is varying. In the last verse there is wretched play upon the words "bent" and "rise."

His house was known to all the vagrant train;
He chid their wanderings, but reliev'd their pain.
The long remember'd beggar was his guest,
Whose beard descending swept his aged breast;
The ruin'd spendthrift, now no longer proud,
Claim'd kindred there, and had his claims allow'd
The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,
Sat by his fire and talk'd the night away;
Wept o'er his wounds, or tales of sorrow done,
Shoulder'd his crutch, and shew'd how fields were won.

Pleas'd with his guests, the good man learn'd to glow,
And quite forgot their vices in their woe;
Careless their merits or their faults to scan,
His pity gave, ere charity began.

I am sorry the poet could find no better employment for his parson than making his house the receptacle of all the beggars in the parish. Surely we might expect the parsonage house would be the resort only of

the pious and the respectable. Instead of this we find nothing there but grey-bearded beggars, ruined spendthrifts, and hobbling soldiers, prating all night about sieges and campaigns.—Excellent companions for a preacher of the gospel!

Perhaps it is not always to be expected that a voluminous author should be consistent throughout.—Different trains of thought will oftentimes lead to contradictory propositions.—But his memory must be short indeed, who controverts in one part of a paragraph what he had asserted in another. The poet has represented his clergyman in one place as chiding their wanderings, and in the course of a few lines, he is “careless to scan their faults,” or “their merits,” and “quite forgets their vices in their woe.”

There is one instance of inconsistent phraseology, and one of false syntax.—Tales of sorrow that are done, are tales of sorrow no longer; and “bade” is the preterite of the verb “to bid,” and not the participle.

Pope speaks of some poets who conclude with “some unmeaning thing they call a thought.” The last line here is supposed to contain something wonderful, and we frequently hear it in the mouth of every booby, who is willing to take sound for sense.—But after all, it means no more than this, that a man must will before he acts. Pity and charity are only different in this, that the one is the internal principle, and the other the overt act.—To tell us that the one precedes the other, is worthy of him only who can spend time, as Polonius says, in reasoning why *day is day, night night, and time time*.

Dear reader, I might pursue this criticism further; but this little delicacy may serve thee for a taste;—

and whenever thou art inclined hereafter to vent thy spleen on the poor Athenæum, stop and ask thyself this question—How much would the fraternity of critics be diminished, if no man was permitted to censure a performance until he himself could write a better one?

“Men’s evil manners live in brass; their virtues
“We write in water.”

SHAKS.

THE truth of this sentiment, so finely expressed by the inimitable Shakespeare, cannot but strike every discerning person with peculiar force. The “*green ey’d*” monster, Envy, is too often perceived in the social circle, depreciating the talents and virtues of the good, and magnifying their defects—it seizes not only upon the living, but enters even “the secrets of the grave.” It has been much doubted how much liberty should be taken by a biographer, in representing the failings and vices of his subject. While some have thought that the errors of the dead should be suffered to remain in silence, others have been of opinion that we should not be so indulgent to the dead as to deceive the living. We believe it will be found, however, that the old maxim, “*De mortuis nil nisi bonum*,” is generally the best to adhere to, so far as it relates to the disclosure of those circumstances in a person’s character, which will neither increase his reputation, nor, at the same time, improve or correct the reader. Many of the circumstances which occur in a man’s life, would have no other effect than to place him in a ridiculous light, without affording any moral to him who is disposed to profit by the example. Nothing should be told of a man, after his character has been fairly repre-

sented, which will lessen his reputation, unless some important good will accrue to society. As such a case, however, will but seldom occur, the Latin maxim will usually hold true. These remarks are intended to apply to the biography of persons eminent for wisdom or virtue—not to delineations of those who are notorious for profligacy and vice. Addison remarks, that envy is hushed by death; and we are taught by reason, that we should be careful not to attack where it is impossible there should be a fair defence.

NOVEL READING.

MESSRS. EDITORS,

I have often had occasion to regret the time thrown away on reading novels, by the giddy part of my own, as well as that of the other sex. With most, the time thus spent, will be worse than a blank—it will be a blot, in the catalogue of their existence.

But to all the serious arguments against this pernicious practice, the cry of innocent amusement and mental relaxation, is always ready. A reader of novels dwells with raptures on the improvement derivable from the elegant style, just sentiments, and inimitable views of human nature, which are contained in these interesting manuals. In addition to these, a particular example lately called forth from a female friend an exposition of another important advantage, which had never struck me.—Among the many nameless and countless excellencies of Miss Porter's "Scottish Chiefs," she observed, that before the reading of it, she had never been so *thoroughly* acquainted with Scottish history. Had I known the exact extent of the la-

dy's historical reading, courtesy would have prevented me from withholding my belief; but wishing to discover the comparison on which the work in question founded its claim to excellence as an historical record, I asked (using very innocently the author for his book) whether she had ever read Knox or Robertson; she artlessly replied, she had read Knox's "Winter Evenings," about three months ago, and had finished "Robinson Crusoe" before she was seven years old, but that she thought the Chiefs infinitely more improving. An opinion so unqualified in favour of the historical authenticity of Miss Porter's volume, in which the Wallace of Romance is as much like the Wallace of History as "I like Hercules," may be supposed to have been perfectly conclusive; although the burthen of the far-famed nursery ballad, "Poor old Robinson Crusoe," came so forcibly to my recollection, that I could not but admire how the fur cap and goat-skin breeches of this adventurous *Vagrant* should have been mistaken, and that too by a lady, for the surplice and cassock of his clerical namesake.

If novels must be read, Richardson and Miss Moore might be selected as standards; but as the enticements to transgress these bounds would probably be irresistible, it would be better to substitute entirely some other reading, or, as my grandmother, a worthy old lady, once observed, on seeing a manual to card playing, written after the manner of Hoyle, and entitled "Advice to Whist Players"—"Indeed, the best advice the gentleman could give them would be—NOT TO PLAY AT ALL."

Yours,

F. A. J.

POETRY.

Dum vitant stulti vitia, in contraria currunt.

HOR.

TO check the follies of our youth;
 To speak the language stern of truth;
 To hold the torch which guides aright,
 Through mists and vapour, clouds and night,
 The wayward followers of pleasure,
 Is but the full of duty's measure:
 Is what we ne'er shall cease to owe,
 While life-blood in our hearts shall flow.
 Can Apathy our breasts congeal,
 And can we ever cease to feel
 For friends belov'd; when modest grace
 Resigns to folly, quits her place,
 And griev'd, awaits some happier hour,
 When they shall once more feel her pow'r?

How oft with thoughts like these oppress'd,
 Have I beheld some maiden, drest
 In fashion's gay attire, pursue
 The course unfortunate, untrue?
 With grief beheld it, though the while
 A tear contended with a smile,
 To see such mirth and sportive glee
 Array'd in Folly's livery.
 I hate the proud, affected lass,
 Who looks in nothing but her glass
 With moderate pleasure—nor her chair
 Can leave without the affected air,
 That seems to say, "Here Miss—goes,
 Esteem'd by friends, admir'd by foes."
 That tells you, "Girls of pomp and pride
 Ne'er like with dullness to abide."
 Nor can I love the loud address,
 The boisterous laugh—which plain confess,
 That neither modesty nor fear
 Have their deserving influence here.

The dull, domestic Miss I hate,
 Who sits in silent, sullen state,
 As doing penance—while her tongue,
 (Perhaps afraid of speaking wrong,)
 Is close confin'd within its cell,
 As snails are hidden in the shell.
 Who ever strives a play to mar,
 And keeps with mirth perpetual war.
 Who, like "Aunt Charity," will fight,
 Till just abandon'd is the right
 To one poor kiss: then straight gives o'er,
 As destitute of strength or power.

I love the middle path to see;
 Yes—that delights and pleases me.
 The easy, gentle, modest mien,
 Not always wishing to be seen.
 Yet ne'er refusing, if 'tis due
 To stranger guest or friendship true.

LUCILIUS.

THE LASH....No. I.

READER, methinks I see you making sport,
 Of my poor lash, because you think's too short:
 If so, proceed, and take your fill of play;
 But recollect, that *each must have his day*.
 While yet you ridicule its pigmy length,
 Your back may feel a trial of its strength;
 For oft it is, when least we dream of fears,
 The whistling lash is snapping round our ears.
 Who has not seen it, tho' 'twas somewhat short,
 Make lacerated backs of villains smart?—
 Around his legs the cutting thong has curl'd,
 And lash'd a rascal naked through the world.
 Suppose your back were measur'd with that thong,
 Tho' short, would you not think it amply long?—
 Give then, to every thing, its due reward,
 And never measure goodness by the yard.

When VICE to VIRTUE bids a bold defiance,
 In gaols and Newgates we must place reliance;
 But when the culprit makes a little trip,
 It is sufficient that he feel the *whip*.

THE LASH....No. II.

Ambition now his tatter'd forces leagues,
 Quits his gun-powder plots, and state intrigues;
 And for YALE-COLLEGE takes his shortest way,
 To hold o'er students' breasts his sovereign sway.
 What was the number—who his proselytes,
 Let him recount who for exactness writes;
 Be mine to tell what mischief he creates,
 Among too many of my College mates.
 As late I chanc'd to open my closet door,
 I heard a student, half despairing, pour
 His curses forth, against his cruel luck,
 Because in recitation he got stuck:

"It was a shame—ye gods!—it was a shame,
 "To fix that *sticking blot* upon my name!—"
 "My life is nought when weigh'd with reputa-

tion—
 "O! I was stuck—and shan't get an ORATION."
 No one will censure him, who arm'd with pro-
 dence;
 Would hold a place among the best of students;
 But vile Ambition's basis is too rotten—
 A College reputation's soon forgotten.

EPIGRAM.

Great Alexander, as historians say,
 Wept for more worlds to conquer and to sway:
 Strange! that his tears for such a cause should
 run,
 When the poor booby never conquer'd one.

NEW-HAVEN:

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